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The Haunting of *Bluebeard—While Listening to a Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle"*

Karen Mozingo

A tall dark-haired man sits at a black, desklike, rolling cart in the center of a large empty room. Paint chips off the white walls, and dead autumn leaves cover the floor. The man is clean shaven and wears a black overcoat and black pants, but no shoes. Without speaking, he plays a tape recording of the overture to Béla Bartók's opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (*Herzog Blaubart's Burg).* As the music begins, he rises and stands over a small dark-haired woman in a red dress, who lies on her back among the leaves, her arms stretched upward as if simultaneously reaching and waiting for something. The man hurls himself on top of her, and she drags his heavy body across the floor, her effort clearing a path through the leaves. As the overture becomes louder, the man rises and stops the tape player, rewinds it, and begins again, returning to his curled position on top of the woman's body. She drags him toward the chair, and as the music reaches the opening line, the man's efforts to stop, rewind, and fall onto her become more frantic. Suddenly he stands, lifting the tiny woman onto her feet and embraces her. Her hand creeps from under his arms and up his torso, inquisitively searching the surface of his chest, neck, and finally his face.

When Pina Bausch toured the United States in 1984 with her 1977 work, *Bluebeard—While Listening to a Recording of Béla Bartók's Opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle" (Blaubart—Beim Anhören einer Tonbandaufnahme von Béla Bartók's Oper 'Herzog Blaubart's Burg')*, the repetitive opening image was only one of the things that aroused American critics' indignation. Critic Anna Kisselgoff wrote, "Miss Bausch could be accused of reveling in a depiction of violence while claiming to condemn it" (1985, 2–14). The objections

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of American critics centered especially around Bausch's use of violence and choice of subject matter, which challenged their beliefs about the balance of content and form, gender relationships, and the social responsibility of the artist. Yet American critics failed to see Bausch's work in the context of a long line of German retellings of both the Bluebeard fairy tale and the National Socialist past. When viewed in relationship to the history and reception of the Bluebeard tale, Bausch's work offers audiences the ability of the body and movement to make visible the hauntings of German culture which keep the Bluebeard canon alive. By distancing her work from the traditional canon, Bausch creates a parodic and burlesque version of Bluebeard which not only subverts its misogynistic text, but also questions the perpetuation of the tradition that supports its retelling. Bausch implies the audience's complicity in the perpetuation of the tale of *Bluebeard* and the brutal behavior valorized by its haunting.

Two recent articles about Bausch's version of Bluebeard attempt to place Bausch's work within a context of the German *Tanztheater* and fairy tale (*Märchen*) traditions in order to illuminate its subversive content and change the negative perception of her work. In *The Fairy Tale Revisted*, Katia Canton writes that subversion in Bausch's work lies in her disruption of the narrative of the Bluebeard *Märchen* through choreographic structure, a device common to Bausch and her contemporaries, who were rebelling against the predominance of ballet in German opera houses during the 1970s (1996, 112–114; and see Manning 1993, 25–27).[1] In her 2004 article, "Pina Bausch Choreographs Blaubart: A Transgressive or Regressive Act?," Meg Mumford contextualizes Bausch's work in relation to the canon of the German *Märchen* and writes that subversive potential is found in Bausch's use of repetition, which highlights the socially constructed nature of both performance and behavior (2004, 57).

While Canton and Mumford provide some answers to the questions posed by Bausch's critics, they rely heavily on analyses of Bausch's use of narrative and choreographic form, leaving some of the critics' questions about Bausch's choice of violent images and perpetuation of the misogynist Bluebeard canon unanswered. To American audiences, Bausch's version appears to perpetuate what Mererid Puw Davies calls the German "canonical bias towards more earnest, violent or tragic texts" which fail to offer visions of women challenging patriarchal roles (2001, 245). In this paper I build on Marvin Carlson's concept of "the haunted stage" (2003, 1–2), arguing that Pina Bausch's choices for the title, opening image, and resulting theatrical structure of her 1977 *Bluebeard* provide instances of performative, historical, and cultural hauntings that subvert not only the Bluebeard text, but also the Bluebeard canon, and through the use of burlesque and parody question the function of the canon in contributing to a fairy tale tradition that tends to exculpate the German public from its violent National Socialist past.

The earliest recognizable European version of the Bluebeard fairy tale is Charles Perrault's "La Barbe Bleue," published in Paris in 1695 in his manuscript version of the fairy tale collection, *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Davies 2001, 33).[2] Bluebeard is a wealthy man with a blue-black beard who lives in a remote castle. In the tale he introduces his bride to her new home and gives her a set of keys. The keys unlock seven

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doors in the castle, and he invites her to explore as she desires, but warns her never to use the key that unlocks the seventh door. When Bluebeard leaves for a trip, his new wife is overcome by curiosity and unlocks the seventh door, where she finds the dead bodies of his previous wives hanging on the walls. Bluebeard returns to find blood on the key to the seventh door and confronts his wife about her transgression, telling her that she now must die; however, the wife's two brothers, whom she contacted during a few brief moments granted her by Bluebeard, arrive as Bluebeard is swinging his wife by her hair. They kill him, and the wife inherits wealth and a happier marriage. Perrault's manuscript was published in 1697 to immediate success, becoming the most familiar version in multiple countries (Davies 2001, 33–34).

A German version of the Bluebeard tale first appeared in Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter's 1772 poem "Blaubart. Eine Romanze." Gotter's poem was followed by several German versions between 1772 and 1812, the most popular being Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's "Blaubart" in their 1812 edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Davies 2001, 97). The Grimm's collection began the German codification of *Märchen*, which developed into a national tradition of using fairy tales to teach social and cultural values to children in German society.[3] In addition to teaching cultural values, Dietz-Ruediger Moser writes that, "grounded in strict views of morality, the fairy tale has the purpose of modeling how conflicts can be resolved" (1980, 61). In Perreault's French version of *Bluebeard*, the conflict between the curious wife and the overbearing, brutal husband is solved through the wife's suspicion and quick thinking. The ending is a subversive one, recovering the virtue of curiosity for women and denouncing the brutality of the abusive husband. Interestingly, in her study of the German Bluebeard canon, Davies writes that from the beginnings of the canon in 1772 through the present, the German texts differ significantly from other countries' versions of the Bluebeard myth by erasing the subversive potential found in the ending of Perrault's *Barbe-Bleue* and favoring darker versions of the text: those that reinterpret the tale's moral as a warning against female curiosity; enhance the tale's sense of timelessness by transposing the tale into distant social or historical contexts; and exculpate Bluebeard in spite of the increasing violence of his crimes (Davies 2001, 69–70).

From 1905 to 1911, an unusual number of brutal Bluebeard versions containing overwhelming savagery toward women were produced in Germany (Davies 2001, 162). In contrast, two French operas were also produced at the turn of the century, Offenbach's *Barbe-Bleue* (1866) and Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe Bleue* (1907). Both of these operas included more hopeful outcomes for women, yet the German response to them was negative, claiming that they trivialized the true story of Bluebeard (Davies 2001, 163–169). Davies writes that the early twentieth century German versions altered the fairy tale by emphasizing explanations for why Bluebeard kills his wives and marginalizing the roles of the women in order to "appeal to notions of national authenticity, historical truth, and original meaning" (2001, 169–170). These changes occurred during WWI, not long after Germany had become a nation, and against the backdrop of German humanist thought. In *The Germans* (1982), Gordon Craig writes that during these years German culture was dominated by a "mortuary obsession" or an "apocalyptic strain"

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(1982, 196). Norbert Elias also writes of the Wilhelminean bourgeoisie's desire for power that surfaced in military references and other images of control during the early 1900s:

> "Iron" is another key word of this period. To be weak or even just to show weakness is, as can be seen, something quite terrible. The memory of the years of weakness still haunts the middle class of this epoch and thus to an extent demands the over-exaggeration of the opposite attitude. (Elias 1996, 206)

The rationalization of Bluebeard's actions and the minimizing of his violence coincide with a period of intense cultural need to forget and suppress the losses of the past and to strengthen the national myth of control and power.

The significance of the Bluebeard fairy tale in German culture is complex, and its theme of a husband's violence toward his wife is an important part of the tale's canonization. Davies writes that around the turn of the century, German writers felt that "German versions of the material are superior because they are more faithful to a putative, ancient original, that is, they are more bloodthirsty and apparently historical in their setting" (2001, 168).[4] From that point on, the German Bluebeard canon came to be dominated by texts in which Bluebeard committed ghastly violence against his wives, and for which he was exculpated. The first European Bluebeard text fully to resist a subversive ending was Bartók's opera, with a libretto by Béla Balázs, composed in 1911. Davies finds similarities between the Hungarian opera and the already mentioned German Bluebeard texts of the early twentieth century (2001, 165). German versions of Bluebeard that came after Bartók's opera, seemed heavily influenced by the darkness of his version, while other European countries continued to develop Perrault's version of a more subversive plot.[5]

The dark haunting of the German Bluebeard tale is evident in the process of how Bausch came to stage *Bluebeard* in 1977. The opera house management suggested that Bausch create a version of Bluebeard using both Bartók's tragic opera and Offenbach's comic operetta to be presented on the same program. According to local critic and friend of Bausch, Jochen Schmidt, Bausch became engrossed in the Bluebeard tale and in Bartók's darker version of it (1998, 52–53). She decided to use only the Bartók version, which she expanded from its one-hour length to two hours, selecting imagery from the libretto as well as the tale she knew from her childhood *Märchen* collections (which most likely included both the Perrealt and Grimm versions) (Canton 1996, 116). The suggestion of the opera house to stage Bluebeard transfers the haunting of the Bluebeard *Märchen* to the German opera and theatre tradition, and Pina Bausch's decision to use the darker version of the tale is interesting in light of what Davies has found to be the uniquely violent and non-utopian haunting of the myth in the German canon.

After 1967, a new interest in the Bluebeard material was evidenced by a rash of new Bluebeard versions. The new versions, written predominantly by men, further developed the trends of the early twentieth-century versions by characterizing Bluebeard as a misunderstood victim of society, women, or a hostile world (Davies 2001, 203).

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This new wave of exculpating Bluebeard's crimes came during the years of the German women's movement and the coming of age of the children of the World War II generation:

> Confrontation of the legacy of National Socialism shifted onto the second post-war generation, due to parental silence on these matters. This not only resulted in a belated addressing of the questions of guilt and responsibility but also burdened the present of the second generation with an impossible task of "coming to terms" with this heritage. (Schmitz 2001, 6)

In these post-WW II versions, Bluebeard seems to represent the anxieties of shifting gender roles and the attempt to dissolute communal guilt for the Nazi past. Pina Bausch's version of Bluebeard breaks from the tendencies of other post-1960s texts by not only foregrounding Bluebeard's violence rather than excusing it, but also calling into question the ways in which the fairy tale supports the complicity of silence surrounding the brutalities of her parents' generation.

Pina Bausch choreographed *Bluebeard* in 1977 for her German company Tanztheater Wuppertal. She had been invited to take over its direction in 1973 as one of the first German choreographers to innovate *Tanztheater*, a mix of contemporary dance and theatrical styles, in what had been ballet-dominated opera houses. *Bluebeard* was her eighth work for the company and marked a turning point in her choreographic style. It was her last work to present a reconstruction of an opera, and her first to begin experimenting with fragmented narrative structures and collaborative choreographic processes. Although Bausch began to choreograph internationally commissioned works in the 1980s and 1990s, her early work was grounded in its German home and choreographed for a German audience. One critic confirms the importance of German audiences to her work: "She came out of the place she worked, a working-class industrial city near Wuppertal. She's very committed to working from her roots" (Mackrell 1999, 10). Annually returning Wuppertal audiences during the company's performance season provided an "interpretive community" for her work in which there was what Marvin Carlson calls a "significant overlap of memory," memories not only of German culture and history, but also of previous performances by the company and previously seen performances of other arts groups (Carlson 1985, 5).[6]

American critics viewing *Bluebeard* without the shared memories of German audiences most frequently criticize its images of violence between men and women. As Mindy Aloff writes, "Pina Bausch has been called a feminist; hers is not a feminism I understand. Her women often have the upper hand, but because their world permits them no way to change anyone's behavior or motivation, they are not in true positions of power" (1984, 156). Mumford echoes Aloff, claiming that Judith is passive for most of the production. Critics also respond to the exaggerated cruelty of the Bluebeard figure, the endless repetition of physically violent movement passages, and the lack of a subversive ending. Bausch's grounding in a long-standing tradition of German theatre and dance and the presence of an interpretive community for her work are important in understanding how Bausch's work intervenes in the canon of the Bluebeard myth. In

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The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine, Marvin Carlson builds his concept of "the haunted stage" on Herbert Blau's concept of the "ghostliness" of performance (Blau 1987, 173) and connects this concept of ghosting or haunting to Richard Schechner's idea of performance as "twice-behaved behavior" (1985, 36–37). He writes,

> Unlike the reception operations of genre (also, of course, of major importance in theatre), in which audience members encounter a new but distinctly different example of a type of artistic product they have encountered before, ghosting presents the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. (Carlson 1985, 7)

Bausch's work certainly makes use of the repetition of genre in that it reworks the Bluebeard fairy tale, and it also includes multiple types of ghosting, beginning with the opening image.

Bausch's work is structured from the beginning by the Bluebeard figure, who sits in the center of the room, covered in a long black coat, repeatedly playing Bartók's opera. What results is a nearly straight play of the opera with some long inserted pauses, and sometimes repeated passages, words, or lines for added emphasis (Anderson 1984, 16). Throughout the two-hour production, Bluebeard, his last wife Judith (as she is called in Bartók's opera), and the women who represent his dead, former wives, are locked in a pattern of physical violence and manipulation, which is compelled to repeat itself with every compulsive replay of the opera tape. The image of dancer Jan Minarek sitting hunched over a tape player, obsessively playing, stopping, and rewinding a German performance of Bartok's opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle," resonates with an earlier theatrical image from a Samuel Beckett work in which the protagonist, Krapp, sits before a table and tape recorder. In Beckett's play, Krapp celebrates his sixty-ninth birthday by recording a reflection on the past year while listening to another tape made on his thirty-ninth birthday, which itself includes reflections on events in a recording of ten years earlier. Mumford writes in her article that "In Beckett's Berlin production of *Krapp's Last Tape* in 1977—he underlined his protagonist's self-incarceration by having him appear in a terry-towelling grey-and-black-striped bathrobe with prison undertones, not unlike Bluebeard's" (Mumford 2004, 53). Mumford connects the two characters' isolation and visual similarities, but she does not discuss the significance of the two images as hauntings—a phenomenon important to the reading of Bausch's work and its place within the Bluebeard canon. In the opening scene, Bausch's *Bluebeard* appears to be haunted by Beckett's production. What is most significant about this haunting however, is that the similar use of a tape recording calls attention to Minarek's character (who has no beard, and thus seems to be any man) being haunted by a recording of Bartók's opera, which is haunted by the tale of *Bluebeard*. Not only is the audience seeing what it has seen before, but it also sees Minarek's character being haunted by something he has heard before.

By distancing her audience from the Bluebeard myth through her title, *Bluebeard—While Listening to a Taped Recording of Bartók's Opera "Duke Bluebeard's Castle,"* Bausch takes the haunting one step further, emphasizing that the audience is watching the

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behavior of a man who is haunted by Bartók's opera, and thus by the dark version of the Bluebeard *Märchen*. As Jack Anderson writes in a review after the piece's 1984 debut in New York, "Bluebeard manipulates both the music and the people around him. But he, too, is manipulated by the music . . . he is compelled to do what he does" (1984, 16). In another review, a critic also mentions that at the end of Bausch's work, the raising of the houselights suggests that the audience is also implicated in its compulsion for hearing and retelling the Bluebeard tale (Anderson 1984, 16).

The ghost of Beckett's production that appears within the opening sequence of Bausch's *Bluebeard* exaggerates Minarek's behavior and emphasizes the compulsion of retelling the past—in many ways an image of the compulsion of retelling stories that have been canonized or mythologized—one of the integral components of burlesque:

> Burlesque exhibits what is "monstrous and unnatural," the end product of exaggeration and juxtaposition, and our delight arises from the surprising absurdity of seeing kings act like fools and vice versa. . . . the burlesque writer's aim is to hold up a distorting mirror; to give us images of the ridiculous which are nearly beyond our ken. (Willson 1975, xi–xii)

While burlesque imitates a genre, such as an opera or epic drama, parody imitates a singular work, usually with the aim of undermining it. Bausch's *Bluebeard* appears to function as both in that it parodies the particular tale of Bluebeard and creates a burlesquelike subversion of the German fairy tale genre, criticizing the motives behind the cultural need for its perpetuation.[7] The exaggeration of the fairy tale is continued in another moment during *Bluebeard*, when Bluebeard protects himself from the encroaching images of his past wives by rolling the tape recorder desk in between his body and the women. Frantically he plays the tape, as if trying to drown out their cries of "I love you." Reading this image in the context of haunting, it seems that Bausch is suggesting that the fairy tale itself becomes a defense against the past. Bluebeard plays the opera repeatedly in order to overcome the torturing memories of his past victims. Bausch's work implies that German audiences similarly tell themselves *Märchen* over and over again as a way of explaining or drowning out the memories of a painful cultural history. In "'Du bist in einem Mörderhaus': representing German history through the Märchen of 'Blaubart' and 'Der Räuberbräutigam' in works by Dieter Hildebrandt and Helma Sanders-Brahms," Mererid Puw Davies writes about a similar use of *Märchen* between Lene and her daughter in the film *Germany, Pale Mother* (*Deutschland, bleiche Mutter)*: "the film might be suggesting that the elder generation did with their children precisely what Lene is doing here with Anna: they told them *Märchen*, in the negative sense of lies or fantasies, about their past" (Davies 2000, 284). In Bausch's *Bluebeard*, the audience is placed in the position of the post-WWII generation, watching a crumbling Bluebeard compulsively telling himself *Märchen* about his wives and his past. She implies that through the audience members' act of silent spectatorship, they too participate in the *Märchen* lies that dominate their country's history. That Bausch chose to parody the tragic version of the Bluebeard fairy tale implies

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that her work can also function as a burlesque, satirizing the use of the fairy tale canon in German culture.

Another device in burlesque is the use of a person who functions as an onstage audience, commenting on the action of the theatrical work (Willson 1975, 96). In plays, the viewer often verbalizes his commentary, but the onstage audience can also be implied by creating a play within a play. In Bausch's *Bluebeard*, Bartók's opera functions as a play within a play, or in this case, fairy tale within a fairy tale. The constant interruption and repetition of the libretto and the absurd movements and images of the performers serve as an onstage commentary that subverts the grim plot of the opera. Judith, danced by Beatrice Libonati, serves as another kind of onstage audience as she actively confronts Bluebeard by presenting the faces of his dead wives to him. In *Bluebeard*, Bausch develops Judith as a seer—a role found in many of her later works—who guides the gaze of the audience and often serves to undermine the objects of her seeing, creating a type of visual deconstruction of the scene unfolding on the stage. Throughout the work, Judith initiates the unhinging of Bluebeard through her attempts at connection and her insistence that he confront the ghosts of his memory. The Bluebeard tale is traditionally interpreted as enforcing a prohibition of women's curiosity, especially within the marital relationship. By foregrounding the moment in which the final wife sees the horror of Bluebeard's past and rushing forward in the plot to the threat of her death, Bluebeard versions cause the theme of curiosity to overshadow the theme of Bluebeard's crimes.[8] Bausch reverses this tendency by foregrounding Judith's act of exposing Bluebeard's past acts to Bluebeard himself, thus exposing the absurdity of his repression of the past. Each caress or advance is symbolic of the legendary Judith unlocking the forbidden doors in Bluebeard's castle. Repeatedly, she pulls a past wife from the rows of pacing headless women, standing them before Bluebeard and raising their faces to meet Bluebeard's gaze. Judith's active role continues through much of the production as she at times climbs onto his back, hangs from his head, and hits him with her hands. By shifting the focus of the tale's plot to Judith's act of uncovering the past and forcing Bluebeard to face it, Bausch creates a tale that pushes the images of his repression and brutality to the foreground.

On the level of parody, the satirizing of figures of power and the revealing of their absurdity is vividly portrayed by Bluebeard's compulsive attempts to fortify himself against his memories and past deeds. Throughout the piece, the women who represent Bluebeard's past wives shuffle through the leaves with their heads hanging before them, their cascading hair giving the illusion of having no heads. Numerous interactions occur through the two hours that vividly portray the "shoring-up" of Bluebeard's ego and his repression of Judith and the ghosts of his past wives. Judith writhes across the floor, barely able to move with the weight of Bluebeard's fully prostrate body grinding her into the leaves. She sits at his feet as he plays the tape, her hand sliding up his body to caress his neck and face. Each time she reaches his head, he shoves her violently back to the floor, his face twisting as if tormented by her touch. His brutality is mirrored by other men, who catch women in sheets and swing them in circles until they cry out.

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They pull women's feet out from under their bodies, causing them to crash to the floor. In another scene, Bluebeard catches his past wives in sheets, swinging them through the air and dumping them on a chair. He sits on them, grinning and clapping his hands like an indifferent, sadistic child.

Judith's persistence in uncovering Bluebeard's memories of his past wives interrupts his attempt to keep a façade of a unified self, much like Bausch's interruptions of the libretto which fragment the plot of the opera. The more Judith threatens the façade, the more Bluebeard attempts to control her. The fractures and fissures of Bluebeard's crumbling self are echoed by the shabby walls of the castle and the debris of dead leaves. In the performance, several runs of the piece contribute to the decay of the leaves—the dancers' sweat saturating them and causing them to cling to their bodies. After each performance the stagehands must inspect the box set, since it becomes loose and weakened by the weight of the women's bodies hanging on and slamming against the walls. Davies writes that Bartók's use of the castle in the opera, "anticipates Jacques Lacan's image of the fortress for the inner reaches of the human subject (and the fortifications around it as neuroses)" (2001, 175).[9] As Judith attacks the fortress of Bluebeard's psyche, Bausch's work attacks the fortress of the Bluebeard fairy tale.

Throughout Bausch's work, rigidity and masculinity seem to be identified with Bluebeard's defenses and portrayed in a way that highlight their absurdity. When Bluebeard's armory is revealed in the libretto of Bartók's opera, the men strike bodybuilding poses for a doll which stands before them on the floor. The opening of Bluebeard's treasury is highlighted by Bluebeard smothering Judith in multiple heavy dresses until she can no longer move. As Davies writes, "Bluebeard can be read as a history of the civilized subject, which is gendered as masculine and constitutes itself by marking itself off from and violently controlling all that it perceives to be its Other, both inside and outside itself" (2001, 176). The more Judith tries to pry open Bluebeard's heart, the more he resists and brutalizes her, until finally she lies lifeless, smothered by dresses, the excesses of his attempts to protect the crumbling remnants of a defended self. In the end, Judith is overcome by the sheer repetition of his violence as he defends himself against the visions of his own brutality. The work ends in darkness as Bluebeard drags Judith's lifeless body to the wall and sits there, clapping, while the past wives and versions of himself dance and freeze at his command.

Judith's compliance with Bluebeard's violence and the morbid ending of the work are the most controversial aspects of Bausch's production, as they provide no subversive ending to the specific Bluebeard plot and seem at first to confirm Aloff's critique and to perpetuate the mistelling of the misogynist German Bluebeard tale. Yet her compliance is similar to the reworkings of *Bluebeard* by other German female authors after 1968 and may provide a partial clue to why German audiences are particularly haunted by the Bluebeard tale. Davies writes that,

> Women writers not only show that women's complicity in the Bluebeard order or masochism are fraught and contradictory, but they acknowledge . . . or even . . . try to provide an explanation of, the way in which the circumstances of women's lives can generate complicity and masochism. (2001, 252)

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The post-World War II generation was particularly haunted by the crimes and complicity of their elders, especially by the complicity of their mothers, who ignored or remained silent in the face of their husband's crimes. As one of Pina Bausch's dancers, Mechtild Grossman, explains, "Politics is not simply what governments do. It is what each person does by the way he or she lives her or his life. If the people in the 1930s [had] stopped obeying, fascism would have never had a chance" (Martin 1986, 104–105). Bausch's ending may serve as a way of exploring the sexual and national tensions of the Bluebeard tale while also refusing to exculpate German women from their own complicity in the crimes of the past. Bausch refrains from substituting the victimization of women within patriarchy as a metaphor for the suffering of victims of the Holocaust by exposing rather than erasing Judith's complicity.[10]

In an earlier section of Bausch's work, Judith watches as Bluebeard reenacts the murder of his three previous wives. One by one, each woman comes before Bluebeard, gives him a white sheet, and begins a lyrical dance of flight, leaping away from him, yet always being drawn back a few steps toward him. One by one he catches them in his sheet, hoists them onto his shoulder, and dumps their bodies across a chair, sitting on them and laughing before the next capture. Although the image foretells of Judith's death, she does not attempt to protect the other wives. We see her seeing Bluebeard re-seeing his past, yet she is powerless to stop him. Bausch shows the women's compliance as a complex negotiation of love, fear, denial, and resignation. Bausch's decision to keep the tragic ending of the German fairy tale is not unusual among post-war generation artists. Like her contemporaries, she does not provide a comfortable ending for *Bluebeard*. She exculpates neither Bluebeard nor Judith for their participation in the violent acts that lead to the tragic ending—an ending that remains open as the sounds of Bluebeard's clapping and the dancing and freezing cycle of the past wives and men continue in the darkness. Rather than being evidence of her failure to subvert the Bluebeard fairy tale's plot, refusing to provide closure for the narrative continues the work's parodic subversion of the meta-narrative represented by the fairy tale. By creating a parody of the Bluebeard *Märchen* and using burlesque elements to question the function of the Bluebeard canon, Pina Bausch's *Bluebeard* subverts the misrepresentation of the tale as a warning against women's curiosity rather than the evils of Bluebeard's crimes, as well as the function of the tale in the German misrepresentation of the National Socialist past.

Notes

1. A more detailed historical contextualization of the development of *Tanztheater* from *Ausdruckstanz* is found in Susan A. Manning's *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*.

2. Tales with similar plots and themes as Bluebeard can be found in non-Western sources as well. *The Thousand and One Nights* includes the story of King Schahriyar, who kills his wives because of their sexual curiosity (Tartar 2003, 167).

3. For more on the German fairy tale tradition, see Jack D. Zipes (1986, 271–

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295). For information on texts included in the acknowledged German Bluebeard canon, see Suhrbier (1984).

4. Davies' argument is based on a 1909 essay by Paul Wiegler, "Der gute Blaubart" in Die *neue Rundschau*, 20:4 (1909), in which he criticized "what he perceived as the French weakening of the original force of the [Blaubart] material." The French materials he references are Offenbach's operetta *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* and Anatole France's *Les sept femmes de Barbe-bleue* (1907) both of which were comic renderings of the tale. In *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (2003), Maria Tartar concurs that Bluebeard was included in the first edition of the Grimm's edition, but was later eliminated due to its association with the French.

5. Davies explains that Bartók's opera was based on the story of Judith and Holofernes, and that the prologue refers to the ravages of war.

6. Carlson refers to Stanley Fish's concept of the audience as "interpretive community" and stresses the importance of the shared experiences of that community as a factor in the reception of a performance work; thus, "new reception experiences are the residue of memory of previous such experiences" (Carlson 1985, 5).

7. I am grateful to Stratos Constantinidis for his helpful insights on parody and burlesque and their function within the mechanism of theatrical memory.

8. In *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales*, Maria Tartar notes that Bluebeard "has repeatedly been read as a tale about curiosity and its consequences. But with its emphasis on forbidden chambers, its movement from curiosity to revulsion, its focus on the 'spectacular' moment rather than the actual act of violence and violation, it is more likely to be addressing fears about violence, death, and sexuality" (Tartar 2003, 171).

9. For more on Lacan's image of the fortress, see Jacques Lacan (1966, 93–100).

10. The position of German women during World War II and the complexities of their representation in post-World War II literature and film is addressed by Davies in "'Du bist in einem Mörderhaus': representing German history through the Märchen of 'Blaubart' and 'Der Räuberbräutigam' in works by Dieter Hildebrandt and Helma Sanders-Brahms." She writes that:

> By making the history of the Holocaust ancillary to a narrative about women's suffering under patriarchy, as the *Märchen* seems to do, it effectively serves to erase the history of the historical victims of the Holocaust and obliquely to deny their suffering, while sympathetically stressing the suffering of a woman complicit in their persecution. And due to the structure of equation and reciprocity inherent in metaphor . . . a narrative which uses suffering Woman in order to represent the Holocaust might seem to imply another, subtextual and reversed narrative in which the Holocaust, in turn might also represent the suffering of Woman. (Davies 2000, 127)

Rather than conflating the struggles of women under patriarchy with the struggles of the victims of the Holocaust, Bausch's work often exposes the tension between the two. Dance historian Susan Manning describes this aspect of Bausch's work in *Ecstasy and the Demon: Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*:

> Do the dancers represent the generation of Bausch's parents, the

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generation that lived through the Nazi period? If so, then this generation provides a clear referent for the role-playing in Bausch's work, the apparent interchangeability of victim and victimizer that actually masks an asymmetry of power. For was it not the previous generation, the generation of Mary Wigman, that had confused the roles of victim and victimizer, believing themselves victims of the Nazis and denying their complicity in the victimization of Jews and other outsiders? (245)

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